

CCC INTERVIEW WITH GUY SMITH

Interviewer: Larry Wilson

Date: Wednesday, February 27, 2002

Location: Panora, Iowa

Interview questions are in regular font.

Mr. Smith's responses are in bold.

DNR: Where was your hometown?

Guy: Bayard. I graduated in 1932. There were 27 people in the senior class. I am the only one left.

DNR: That's a good size class. How old were you when you enrolled in the camp?

Guy: 22 years old.

DNR: What kind of work did you do before you went into the CCC?

Guy: There wasn't much to do. I did farm labor, day labor. I worked on an election.

DNR: Do you remember your CCC camp number? It is 1758 on this picture.

Guy: I can't remember. Camp number is 225. It was Company 1758, Iowa.

DNR: Where did you sign up?

Guy: I don't remember.

DNR: You signed up in the spring of '35 and they sent you to Spring Grove.

Guy: Yes. I think, I don't remember, I think it was King State Park. Then it was called Springbrook. It was purchased from Don King.

DNR: You went to Springbrook first and then Clarinda. What were the first days like?

Guy: We did kitchen work. Laying tile. We dug ditches six feet wide because of sandy soil. The barracks were the only buildings up. The barracks numbered about six or seven.

DNR: How did you get assigned to the barracks?

Guy: They just told us. We supplied our own clothes.

DNR: You had to supply your own clothes?

Guy: Hell no. No uniforms at all.

DNR: Personal items?

Guy: They furnished the toothpaste and soap.

DNR: Was there anything you couldn't bring with you?

Guy: I don't remember.

DNR: Were they wooden barracks?

Guy: It was a single story barracks. We had steel bunks.

DNR: Were blankets and bedding provided?

Guy: Yes. We had a mess hall. We served KP.

DNR: How was the food?

Guy: Pretty good.

DNR: Who were the cooks?

Guy: They had people there.

DNR: Do you remember holiday meals?

Guy: No.

DNR: Do you remember any of the guys in the barracks?

Guy: We had a guy named Jessie. One boy we nicknamed "Overalls". He wore his overalls every night to bed.

DNR: How did you guys get along in the barracks?

Guy: We got along great.

DNR: They had plenty of people for the jobs?

Guy: Yes.

DNR: Have you been out to Springbrook recently?

Guy: Five years. A lot of rock, boulders were hauled in there to Springbrook. We built the shelter house out of rock.

DNR: Where were the restroom facilities?

Guy: I don't remember restroom or shower facilities.

DNR: When was payday?

Guy: I don't remember but it was once a month. Money went home to the folks.

DNR: How much money did you keep?

Guy: I don't remember. Maybe \$15.

DNR: You had a PX there to spend some of the money. Did you have any days off?

Guy: Well, I guess we did on the weekends. I used to take time off and hitchhike.

DNR: How far is Bayard to Springbrook?

Guy: Probably 15 miles.

DNR: Was there church service on Sundays?

Guy: I don't remember.

DNR: Was there sport activities, like baseball?

Guy: Not to speak of.

DNR: Did they have a recreation hall?

Guy: I don't remember. But there was one. How long did the CCC last?

DNR: The CCC's went to '42. They started in '33 and went to '42. How did the other boys get along with you, any problems?

Guy: No.

DNR: Any problems were handled how?

Guy: We had officers in the camp. When we moved to Clarinda, they used army trucks.

DNR: What kind of punishment did they have?

Guy: I don't know.

DNR: Did they offer you educational or vocational training?

Guy: Not that I remember of. I did in the service. I was a rifle instructor in WWII.

DNR: Now, at Springbrook you had to lay some tile?

Guy: We laid tile.

DNR: Was the dam built at that time?

Guy: They were building the dam.

DNR: So you were at Springbrook about a month. Then you went to Clarinda. You laid tile for a month at Springbrook.

Guy: And I helped built the road by hand. There was no machinery at all, I tell you.

DNR: So when you went from Springbrook to Clarinda, what did you do down in Clarinda?

Guy: We built dams across the gullies. That's all it was, soil erosion work.

DNR: You were there from May to September.

Guy: We had a first sergeant. His name was Archie Amons. He was a boxer in Clarinda. He was a good one. He called us for the work detail. Right there on the fairgrounds. During WWII they used the camp as a POW camp.

DNR: Then you came back to Springbrook and you stayed there from September 1 to November 1 on park improvements?

Guy: All the farmers had to do was sign up for the work. Then they would send us.

DNR: Any types of skills you received?

Guy: Would you like a cup of coffee?

DNR: Who were your leaders on the work details?

Guy: Yeah. The officers and sergeants told us what to do. It was interesting work.

DNR: Where was Archie Amons from?

Guy: I don't remember. We had a boxing match once with another group of campers. They got behind their boxer and we got behind our boxer, Archie. Archie won.

DNR: So you would work on one project at a time?

Guy: Yes.

DNR: Okay. Any specialized equipment you used?

Guy: Axe. They had hedge groves, and we cut them with axes instead of hedge cutters. It wasn't worth a damn. If the farmer had a hedge grove he didn't need a fence.

DNR: Were they particular about cleaning the tools, keeping them clean and sharp?

Guy: I don't remember.

DNR: Were these the same guys you were living with in the barracks that you worked with?

Guy: Yeah.

DNR: Have you had any contact with any of the guys?

Guy: No.

DNR: Did the city kids and country kids get along?

Guy: Yes. At that time everybody was poor. There were no rich folks.

DNR: Any minority groups?

Guy: None.

DNR: Did you learn any special skills?

Guy: None. A few friends of mine and I went to California to work. We harvested almonds. One thing about going west, if you were from Iowa you were Iowa boys. If you were from Oklahoma, they didn't like you.

DNR: Were there any injuries in Clarinda or the other camp?

Guy: No.

DNR: Were you ever hurt?

Guy: Nope.

DNR: If anybody was ever hurt, what would you do?

Guy: We might have had an infirmary.

DNR: Remember any diseases in those camps?

Guy: Just one case of encephalitis.

DNR: Were there any insect or rodent problems around the camps?

Guy: No.

DNR: At Springbrook you were working on the park. But at Clarinda you were working on private farms doing soil erosion work?

Guy: All over the county.

DNR: Did you do any other work besides working at the camp?

Guy: No. We had free time there. It must have been on the weekends. We went swimming.

DNR: On weekends?

Guy: Yeah. We had a cook at Clarinda who had a school for cooking. He was a good pastry man. He taught us how to make pies. He must of taught us at Clarinda. I learned how to cook pies.

DNR: Did you have contact with the surrounding community?

Guy: No.

DNR: Do you remember any organizations, like Elks, or Mason organization?

Guy: No.

DNR: Can you tell me about any contacts you had with females in the camp?

Guy: No.

DNR: Was there any problems with the local boys?

Guy: No.

DNR: What did the community think of the CCC camp?

Guy: I don't know.

DNR: Do have any experience that is the most memorable?

Guy: The only thing I could remember, the punks around town, would call me liver lips.

DNR: Any strange or odd experiences in the camp?

Guy: No.

DNR: How did you like the change from normal life to CCC?

Guy: We didn't think about it that way. It was just a continuation.

DNR: You left the CCC's in '35?

Guy: I worked on farms. I got to work for farms in the fall in California. You had 15 feet long poles, in two inch diameters. You would shake the tree, with a canvas tarp underneath. We had four people to the tree. We used gunnysacks for the almonds. The pay was pretty good. Around 35 cents to 45 cents a hour in Chico. Two kinds of almonds. There is the female and the male. We didn't harvest the male. The male was a hard shell. We wanted the female which was a soft-shell. It was used by the confection companies.

DNR: Then you came back and worked for an implement dealer. What kind of work did you do?

Guy: I was in the parts department. We sold cars as well. I worked until I shipped out. Skylark Gasoline. I went into partnership with another one. I retired in 1979.

DNR: How long were you with the Guthrie County Conservation Board?

Guy: I was there from 1972 to 1979.

DNR: Who was the director of the county board? Do you remember?

Guy: Yeah, it was Sam Waterson. It was a three man board. He was a conservationist. We have a park named after him. We had Stewart. Jim Carroll was another. I worked there for five years without an increase in salary. \$4,000 a year. They covered my housing costs. That's all I got. The house cost \$17,000 to build.

DNR: You first went into Springbrook then the whole outfit went to Clarinda?

Guy: Yes.

DNR: So what did you do in the mornings. What time did they get you up?

Guy: About 6 a.m.

DNR: Did they line you up on the parade ground, and count you up and raise the flag?

Guy: I don't remember. Army regulations ran the camp.

DNR: Did you have an army guy inspect your barracks?

Guy: Not too much.

DNR: Let's talk about your service.

Guy: I went into the service, right after the Christmas of '44. I was signed up in Jasper County at a gas station. I was drafted in Jasper County. The war broke out. I bought the gas station with no money down and gas was two cents a gallon. I was there for six months. I starved to death. Luckily we had a gardener. All I had was ten cents. So I went downtown for my wife to buy her a loaf of bread. That's what I did with my last ten cents. Sometimes I would fix a tire for fifty cents. My wife had a boy. I was called into the service.

DNR: Then what happened when you were drafted?

Guy: I was inducted in Des Moines. They shipped us out to Texas. It took two days. They never told us where we were going.

DNR: This was an infantry training center. This is where you were a rifle instructor?

Guy: Yes. I took my basic there. The boys shipped out overseas. I was 32 or 33 years old. I think that's why they kept me. I had a boy at home. I was there 2 ½ years.

DNR: What did you do after the service?

Guy: Then I went to go work with Earl Reuben. He was a good fella. He liked thee, but I like me better. He had the Urban Auto Company. I was getting long in years. I took the conservation job in the fall of 1972. I was there seven years. I did a lot of sharpening of hand tools, chain saws. I have a machine that does carbide blades. I did that up until last year.

DNR: So you had a little business?

Guy: Yes. My social security is too damn small. I am drawing \$700 a month.

Updated July 18, 2005 after receiving input from Guy Smith through Diane at the Panora Care & Rehab Center.